

DECAY ON DISPLAY: THE FUNERAL TRAIN JOURNEYS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND TSAR
ALEXANDER III

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ABSTRACT

KATHLEEN MARIE CONTI: *Decay on Display: The Funeral Train Journeys of Abraham Lincoln and Tsar Alexander III*

(Under the direction of Louise McReynolds, Donald J. Raleigh, W. Fitzhugh Brundage)

The circumstances surrounding the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in 1865 and Tsar Alexander III's death in 1894 shared little in common, but each leader's funeral evolved into a train journey traversing hundreds of miles that allowed citizens to participate in the mourning process in ways previously unimaginable. These lavish obsequies occurred on the heels of the extreme trauma associated with America's Civil War and Russia's two famines and an accompanying cholera epidemic, each of which claimed hundreds of thousands. I argue that survivors were able to mourn others recently lost by mourning the leader; a grandiose, serial funeral for one man served as a proxy ceremony for citizens denied a proper burial. Perhaps equally magnificent in scale and splendor, these funeral pageants differed in their success. Lincoln's elevated him to political sainthood for decades to come, whereas similar attempts to perform a secular canonization of Alexander ultimately failed.

To Jolene Grania, who always reminds me to look for the hummingbirds

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Immeasurably appreciative of the numerous mentors in my academic career, I first discovered my fondness for Lincoln during a seminar as an undergraduate with John d'Entremont. This project grew out of a suggestion by Louise McReynolds during a course

on Imperial Russia—it is her I have to acknowledge for the phrase “decay on display”—and she provided great critiques and advice throughout the process. I owe credit to numerous Russian professors throughout my academic career, particularly Klawia Thresher, Zoya Vasileva, Yullia Aloshecheva, Aleksandr Victorov, and Elena Maksimova, for their patience and willingness to sit down and talk about Russian culture, literature, and history. Don Raleigh and his graduate research seminar proved invaluable for gaining new insight into my project and receiving valuable critiques as it developed. Fitzhugh Brundage graciously agreed to be the third reader, lending his expertise on the Civil War period. Edna Andrews, Bob Jenkins, and Jacqueline Olich supported me throughout every step of this degree, and I cannot thank them and the centers enough for their support.

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Introduction

*I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men—I saw them;
I saw the debris and debris of all the dead soldiers of the war;
But I saw they were not as was thought;
They themselves were fully at rest—they suffer'd not;
The living remain'd and suffer'd*¹

As humans, we seek to understand and manage death, preserving, practicing, and creating a multitude of rituals surrounding it.² These mourning customs, as anthropologist Antonius Robben argues, have “repaired broken ties, reaffirmed the continuity and solidarity of the community.”³ Not limited solely as a reaction to the death of an individual, mourning also serves as a response to society’s losses in war, famine, and disease. By creating a public outlet in response to an event threatening the cohesive fiber of a nation, governments hope to help provide stability and a way forward. Following the unexpected deaths of American President Abraham Lincoln in 1865 and Russian Tsar Alexander III in 1894, both countries produced lavish funerals in an attempt for national reconciliation in times of turmoil and carnage.

¹ Walt Whitman, “When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom’d,” *Leaves of Grass*. (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1900), Reproduced, Bartleby.com, 1999. <http://www.bartleby.com/142/192.html/>.

² The body of scholarship on death and dying is immense. I am greatly indebted to Drew Giplin Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering* for exposing me to much of the literature and whose scholarship on the Civil War provided a framework for viewing events in Russia three decades later. Specifically, see: Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), xiv.

³ Antonious C. G. M. Robben, “Death and Anthropology: An Introduction,” in *Death, Mourning, and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader*, ed. Antonious C. G. M. Robben (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 3.

For Americans, the Civil War ended only days prior to Lincoln's assassination, leaving over 600,000 of their soldiers dead and a nation without a blueprint for knitting back together their country, so divided and drenched in blood. For Russia, Alexander's death came on the heels of two famines and a cholera epidemic in which rumors circulated that the government had "willfully produced the epidemic for the specific purpose of killing a given number of people."⁴ Moreover, many of the hundreds of thousands who had died were deprived of funeral rites expected in both countries. By mourning the leader, survivors were able to also mourn others recently lost; a grandiose, serial funeral for one man served as a proxy ceremony for citizens denied a proper burial.

My comparisons of Lincoln and Alexander III stem not from similarities between them as leaders, but rather between the scale of ceremonial mourning, the transportation of the body via locomotive, and the rhetoric describing the transformation of a controversial leader into someone saintly after death.⁵ Although they occurred in different decades and countries, the obsequies of Lincoln and Alexander bore striking resemblance to each other. For their duration, the funeral pageants remained the center of popular attention. These were events in which the whole nation could participate. By comparing, we are able to look "beyond the national framework" of these two events, as German historian Heinz-Gerhard Haupt argues in his article on the advantages of comparative history, and thus can "overcome the stereotypes of national

⁴ Nancy M. Frieden, "The Russian Cholera Epidemic, 1892-93, and Medical Professionalization," *Journal of Social History* 10 no. 4 (1977): 548.

⁵ There is a considerable body of comparative literature on Alexander II, the father of Alexander III, and on Lincoln. In addition to being contemporaries, both were emancipators and were later assassinated. Scholars have drawn numerous parallels between them, including a 2008 collection, ed. Marilyn Pfeifer Swezey, *The Tsar and the President: Alexander II and Abraham Lincoln, Liberator and Emancipator*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008).

historiography and show even well-known phenomena in a new light.”⁶ In doing so, I first take up some questions of a theoretical nature to establish a framework for evaluating these two events. Subsequently, I address the atmosphere of the time period and the prominence of death before moving on to analyses of the funeral trains for Lincoln and Alexander.

Owing to the interrelated changes brought on by war, industrialization, and modernization, traditions and rituals became particularly important for societies during the nineteenth century, bringing a sense of continuity, comfort, and a connection to the past.⁷ America and Russia underwent especially dramatic changes in the years surrounding the deaths of Abraham Lincoln and Alexander III, respectively, and subsequently government officials left in charge of the funeral arrangements sought to emphasize traditional elements of the national culture through mourning rituals—paradoxically by embracing technological advancements in railroads and embalming. As sociologist Karen J. Engle writes, “What binds us together, as friends, as lovers, or even—as troubled a concept as it is—communities, is the experience of mourning.”⁸ Moments of tragedy can serve as a rallying point, behind which a community might unite and, through this, develop a more cohesive narrative through traditional mourning rituals. Interestingly, however, many of these “traditional” elements which, as scholar Eric Hobsbawm argues, “appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes

⁶ Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, trans. Elisabeth Elgan. “Comparative History—a Contested Method.” *Historisk Tidskrift* 127 no. 4, (2007): 3, 11. http://virgo.unive.it/eurodoct/documenti/Haupt_Comparative_history.pdf

⁷ David Cannadine, “The Context, Performance, and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the ‘Invention of Tradition,’ c. 1820-1977,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 106-7.

⁸ Karen J. Engle, “Putting Mourning to Work: Making Sense of 9/11,” *Theory Culture Society* 24, no. 61 (2007): 62.

invented” for political or nationalistic purposes.⁹ Faced with a tragic event, communities often engage in public mourning; however, such demonstrations do not exhibit “spontaneous emotion” in that they are typically planned and showcased at a ceremony to commemorate the loss as part of a “collective obligation.”¹⁰ Confronted with the death of their leader on the heels of widespread fatalities, government officials orchestrated ritualized reconciliation. Citizens partook in extensive mourning events as the body of the leader journeyed by train to his final resting spot. Traveling across the country for hundreds of miles, the funeral train stopped frequently along the way, allowing for a succession of funerals and enabling participation by the masses in a way previously unimaginable.

Despite rich prospects for comparison between these two funeral journeys, no published scholarship has attempted this endeavor.¹¹ Unsurprisingly, Lincoln receives more scholarly and popular attention due to his more prominent place in his country’s history. There are over 15,000 books published about Lincoln—enough to build a tower over three stories high—yet his funeral journey is often overlooked.¹² Indeed, one of the foremost biographies of

⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Tradition” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14.

¹⁰ Robben, “Death and Anthropology: An Introduction,” 7.

¹¹ It is unknown whether officials in Russia planning Alexander III’s funeral proceedings looked to Lincoln’s for inspiration, but it is interesting to note that Mary Todd Lincoln carried portraits of the Russian Imperial family with her until her death in 1882. Conversation with James Cornelius, curator of the Lincoln collection at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, July 17, 2012. Though the curator had records that Mary Todd Lincoln did so, he has not found any explanation for it, either in her own notes or in the recollections of others around her.

¹² Steven Hodson, “Just How Many Books about Abe Lincoln Have There Been Written? Three Stories Worth,” *The Inquisitor*, February 11, 2012. <http://www.inquisitr.com/193150/just-how-many-books-about-abe-lincoln-have-there-been-written-three-stories-worth/>. James L. Swanson’s *Bloody Crimes: The Funeral of Abraham Lincoln and the Chase for Jefferson Davis* is a recent exception.

Lincoln, by David Herbert Donald, ends with his death at 7:22 on the morning of April 15.¹³

Alexander III was the last tsar to have a funeral in imperial Russia. His was not merely a funeral, but a grandiose political statement attempting to reaffirm the power of the autocracy within the traditions of Orthodoxy. Scholars have often dismissed Alexander III, viewing him solely as a reactionary, without thoroughly examining leadership in the increasingly tumultuous times before the 1917 Revolution. As such, even fewer account examine the rituals surrounding Alexander's death, hinting to the efforts of government officials to improve relations with the people.¹⁴ In sum, the funeral trains for Lincoln and Alexander serve as a medium for identifying the similarities between these two unique political environments seeking national reconciliation.

The broader study of death and dying continues to fascinate scholars. French historian Phillipe Ariès' influential *The Hour of Our Death* helped promote the field in its thorough description and analysis of cultural rituals and beliefs surrounding death.¹⁵ Ariès explores the evolution of mourning attitudes and practices, arguing that it became more private and hidden in the nineteenth century, retreating from the public space; however, the funeral spectacles for

¹³ David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1995). Scott Trostel's self-published *The Lincoln Funeral Train: The Final Journey and National Funeral for Abraham Lincoln* provides many details, but unfortunately does not credit its sources and lacks methodological rigor. See: Scott D. Trostel, *The Lincoln Funeral Train: The Final Journey and National Funeral for Abraham Lincoln* (Fletcher, Ohio: Cam-Tech Publishing, 2002).

¹⁴ Richard Wortman's *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in the Russian Monarchy From Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas I* is an excellent secondary source exploring the importance and role of rituals in Russia, including his section on Alexander III. See Wortman, 313-16. For more on the life on Alexander, see: Valentina Grigorievna Chernukha, "Emperor Alexander III, 1881-1894," in *Emperors and Empresses of Russia: Rediscovering the Romanovs*, eds. Donald J. Raleigh and Akhmed Akhmedovich Iskenderov, 334-368. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996) while Heidi W. Whelan's *Alexander III and the State Council: Bureaucracy and Counter-reform in Russia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982) provides an excellent look at the relationship between Alexander and his government.

¹⁵ Phillipe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Vintage Books, 1981).

Lincoln and Alexander, as I will discuss, held a center place in society. Death and mourning have not been adequately explored in the Russian context, though Thomas Trice's 1998 dissertation, "The 'Body Politic': Russian Funerals and the Politics of Representation, 1841-1921,"¹⁶ seeks to address this dearth in the scholarship, as does Catherine Merridale's 2001 monograph, *Night of Stone*.¹⁷ Trice argues for the necessity of adding the Russian experience to historiography, especially as it does not fit Ariès' paradigm for the nineteenth century, for "death did not retreat from public life in modern Russia, it remained at its center."¹⁸ Trice argues that in Russia, the funeral rituals became a stage for "affirming or challenging existing relations of power" between the people, the Orthodox church, and governmental authorities, eventually becoming a "particularly resonant form of self-assertion."¹⁹ Drew Giplin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* details the American experience of mourning during the mid-nineteenth century. "Death created the modern American union," Faust contends, "not just by ensuring national survival, but by shaping enduring national structures and commitments."²⁰ Faust's general argument about the importance of the Civil War's dead holds true for the dead of Russia's famines and cholera epidemic. Faced with an overwhelming number of bodies—many of which remained unidentified and were buried without religious

¹⁶ Thomas Trice, "The 'Body Politic': Russian Funerals and the Politics of Representation, 1841-1921" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1998), ProQuest (304437572).

¹⁷ Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth-Century Russia* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2001).

¹⁸ Trice, "The 'Body Politic,'" 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, iii.

²⁰ Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, xiv.

ceremonies in mass graves—the funeral for the body of one man became a vehicle for mass mourning and national reconciliation.

“We Mourn a Nation’s Loss”: The Dead as Artifacts of Civil War, Epidemic, and Famine

“One of the striking indications of civilization and refinement among a people is the tenderness and care manifested by them towards their dead.”²¹

In her introduction to *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, anthropologist Katherine Verdery argues that dead bodies have “enjoyed political life the world over and since far back in time,” citing examples of saints’ relics, Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*, and more recently, the controversial corpses of Lenin and Stalin.²² Although her work focuses on the function of dead bodies in postsocialist politics, her overall argument on the ability of the living’s discussion and treatment of the dead helps us identify the “political transformation” that occurred during the funerals of Lincoln and Alexander, including “meanings, feelings, the sacred, ideas of morality, the nonrational—all ingredients of ‘legitimacy’ or ‘regime consolidation.’”²³ In light of the widespread tragedies, death remained a main focus in the culture of 1860s America and 1890s Russia. There are, however, fundamental differences in the nature of the deaths of the Civil War and those of Russia’s cholera epidemic and famines. The war was unprecedented in modern Western history, showcasing the barbarism of contemporary war in which men agreed to fight and sacrifice the lives of their soldiers, whether directly in immediate battlefield casualties, or through the spread of disease that ran rampant throughout the war. Famine and epidemic were not uncommon, but these were natural tragedies in that they were not created by men; nevertheless, rumors about the government’s role, either by lack of action to alleviate

²¹ Board of Trustees of the Antietam National Cemetery, *History of Antietam National Cemetery* (Baltimore: J. W. Woods, 1869), 5. As cited in, Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 61.

²² Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 1.

²³ *Ibid.*, 25.

the suffering or even by direct action in the case of the cholera, complicated the notion of these events being outside man's control. Such variances between the dead of Russia and America do not prevent a comparison in light of the similarity in scale of the sheer number of bodies requiring burial. The circumstances of their deaths necessitated hasty burials that often went against traditional notions of what constituted a "proper" burial. The bodies of Abraham Lincoln and Tsar Alexander III thus became imbued with such political significance precisely because so many of their countrymen previously were deprived of such rites. While I will explore the conditions within both countries, I devote more space to the cholera epidemic and famines simply due the comparative paucity in scholarship.²⁴

We can comprehend the number of dead in the Civil War only by considering that no family was untouched. Approximately 2 percent of the population died as a result of the war, about equal to the combined American fatalities in the wars between the Revolution and the Korean War.²⁵ The development of photography meant that civilians far removed from battlefields could not only read about the carnage, but also observe it for themselves. Such massive numbers of bodies demanded a burial system that ultimately dehumanized "both the living and the dead in their disregard."²⁶ Contemporary observers questioned practices that blurred the lines between corpses of men and carcasses of animals; often, the war's dead were

²⁴ Specifically, a 2002 estimate for the number of books published on the Civil War ranged between 50,000 and 70,000. See: Margaret E., Wagner, et. all, *The Library of Congress Civil War Desk Reference*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), xx.

²⁵ Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, xi. For a more in-depth analysis on the differences in death toll estimates, see Darroch Greer, "Counting Civil War Casualties, Week-By-Week, For The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. *BRC Imagination Arts*, 2005, http://www.brcweb.com/alplm/BRC_Counting_Casualties.pdf

²⁶ *Ibid.*, xvii.

buried unceremoniously in mass graves, “in bunches, just like dead chickens.”²⁷

Disposing of their fallen comrades in such a manner caused inner turmoil among survivors. “It is dreadful,” one Confederate soldier wrote home, “to contemplate being killed on the field of battle without a kind hand to hide one’s remains from the eye of the world or the gnawing of animals and buzzards.”²⁸ In many cases, there simply was not time between hostilities to bury the dead, leading to the rise in popularity of the phrase, “let the dead bury the dead.”²⁹ The nature of battle meant that victors often gained the field, becoming responsible for burying both their own and enemy dead. “They dig holes,” one soldier wrote, “and pile them in like dead cattle and have teams draw them together like picking pumpkins.”³⁰ Such actions not only dishonored the fallen heroes, but fundamentally challenged notions the living held of themselves and of their own humanity.

Although the death toll for Russia’s cholera epidemic and the two famines preceding Alexander’s death is greater than America’s Civil War dead—numbering over 629,000—these events have not received similar attention in either scholarship or popular memory.³¹ Historian Richard Robbins’ monograph *Famine in Russia 1891-1892* argues that Alexander’s government tried to adequately respond to the disasters and enacted many effective relief programs, but

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

³¹ Nancy Frieden cites over 254,000 deaths from cholera in 1892 and 1893, whereas some estimates place the death toll at 300,000 for 1892 alone. Richard Robbins estimates between 300,000 375,000 and 400,000 died as a direct consequence of the famine, though some estimates place it closer to 650,000. See Frieden, “The Russian Cholera Epidemic,” 551, and Richard G. Robbins, *Famine in Russia: 1891-1892: The Imperial Government Responds to A Crisis* (New York: Columbia, 1975), 170-71.

that ultimately it did not matter how successful the efforts were; they simply could not overcome either the wretchedness inherent in such tragic circumstances or the persistent popular belief that government was to blame. These years marked the decline of the empire, for these events fundamentally challenged the authority of a regime claiming to make Russia a respected and powerful presence in the modern world. "From 1891 on," Robbins writes, "the Tsar's government faced a crescendo of criticism and opposition which would culminate first in the revolution of 1905 and then in the total collapse of 1917."³²

During this time, many people published articles discussing the dismal suffering, and pondered what was to be done. In May 1892, the United States Minister in St. Petersburg, Charles Emory Smith, published an article detailing the state of the Russian famine, explaining it as "one of those stupendous catastrophes which almost baffles comprehension."³³ Covering an area ten times the size of New York state and affecting over thirty million, Smith hoped to provide a picture to his readers of "widespread distress which can hardly be overdrawn."³⁴ Petr Kropotkin, a member of the intelligentsia and exiled anarchist, felt it necessary to explain the peculiarities of the Russian nation in light of the terrible famine years of 1891 and 1892. He published an article a few months after Alexander's death to acknowledge that Russia needed to "convince itself of its utter helplessness to prevent like calamities in the future."³⁵ Kropotkin argued that the Russian government expected such a disaster to occur at some point in the

³² Robbins, *Famine in Russia*, 176.

³³ Charles Emory Smith, "The Famine in Russia," *The North American Review* 154, no. 426 (May 1892): 541.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 542.

³⁵ First distributed in *The Nineteenth Century*, a British magazine, it was soon reproduced in the American periodical *Little's Living Age*. See: Peter Kropotkin, "The Present Condition of Russia," *Littell's Living Age* (1844-1896) 207, no. 2677 (Oct. 26, 1895): 215.

future, citing a commissioned report issued twenty years earlier concluding, “the peasantry is now in such a state, that a slight failure of the crops will unavoidably result in a terrible famine.”³⁶ The author names fundamental flaws in the system of agricultural production that the government did not address.³⁷ Yet the scale of the famines was so great that it made “optimism or indifference” impossible, thus resulting in a dramatic change in public opinion.³⁸ Furthermore, the government refrained from using the word “*golod*” (famine), instead employing euphemisms such as “*neurozhai*” (crop failure) “*nedorod*” (bad harvest), and “*bedstvie*” (misfortune).³⁹ Such actions further convinced the troubled population that government officials were not adequately handling the disaster, despite the fact that at the famine’s pinnacle, more than eleven million received governmental rations.⁴⁰

To make matters worse, infectious diseases struck throughout the empire, but with particular force in the provinces hit hardest by the famine. The people’s perception of cholera resulted in widespread panic, anger, and even riots targeting medical personal and government officials. Such incidences increased deaths, both from cholera and from the violence itself, and worsened the situation “indirectly by paralyzing the authorities and by rendering it impossible

³⁶ Kropotkin, “The Present Condition of Russia,” 215.

³⁷ The nation produced no surplus of grains, yet in the three years preceding the first famine of the 1890s exported 48 percent of the crops and that the land allotments given at the time of the 1861 emancipation remained too small then, yet thirty years later the population had increased by one-third.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 216.

³⁹ Robbins, *Famine in Russia*, 64.

⁴⁰ As Robbins points out, there is no sure way to determine how effective governmental relief efforts were; however, it is interesting to note that a famine of similar magnitude and affecting a similarly-sized population occurred in Ukraine in 1932-33. No governmental aid was given and at least five million died. For more information, see Robbins, *Famine in Russia*, 172.

to carry out even the most simple measures to check the epidemic.”⁴¹ Shedding light on their resistance to doctors, historian Leonid Heretz delves into the peasant understanding and characterization of the disease and argues that the peasants believed that the doctors merely claimed to possess a cure to cholera, but “in fact spread disease and hastened death.”⁴² In 1892, a government ship docked at Astrakhan’s port, believed by the infected populace to be carrying clean water and food. It arrived with coffins instead, and so “the implication that it gave to the crowd was unusually clear; it had been decreed to kill as many people as there were coffins.”⁴³

Some citizens of the empire understood the cholera epidemic in apocalyptic terms, believing “Russia is finished. Killer disease has been let loose,” perceiving the combination of famine and disease to be a sign of chastisement from God for their sins.⁴⁴ A contemporary observer, Frank Clemow suggested that the “unprecedented rapidity” with which the cholera spread “may be most plausibly explained as the result of the laying down of many new railways and of the increase of the number of people who travel by rail.”⁴⁵ Yet, for the common man, cholera seemed otherworldly in its attack. Many referred to the disease simply as “*ona*” (she),

⁴¹ Frank Gerard Clemow, *The Cholera Epidemic of 1892 in the Russian Empire: With Notes Upon Treatment and Methods of Disinfection in Cholera, and a Short Account of the Conference on Cholera Held in St. Petersburg in December 1892* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1893), 63.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=YhI1AQAAMAJ63>.

⁴² Leonid Heretz, *Russia on the Eve of Modernity: Popular Religion and Traditional Culture under the Last Tsars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 137.

⁴³ Frieden, “The Russian Cholera Epidemic,” 546.

⁴⁴ S. Anikin, “Kholernyi god,” *Vestnik Evropy* (January 1913), 98-99. As cited in Heretz, *Russia on the Eve of Modernity*, 131.

⁴⁵ His account details the proceedings of the December 1892 Conference on Cholera held in St. Petersburg and pieces together the spread of the disease and hypothesizes possible causes. See: Clemow, *The Cholera Epidemic of 1892*, 3.

fearing mentioning it by name—especially as it seemingly moved with a much more dastardly design, striking hardest upon the poor.⁴⁶ The nature of the disease caused “the living patients to look like the dead and the dead like the living,” leading to the belief that many were buried alive, particularly when post-mortem spasms occurred.⁴⁷ Restrictions designed to combat the spread of the disease prevented many from observing traditional burial rituals, resulting in corpses being buried unceremoniously. One physician reported that patients who recovered confessed their terror at being admitted to the cholera barracks, believing the only exit was

the grave. They had heard that some sort of *sanitaire* in leather gloves with an iron hook roamed the streets; if he saw someone who looked sick—or just a bit drunk—he would seize the unfortunate one with the hook, throw him like a dog into a cart, and carry him to the cholera hospital. There they would shower him with lime, cram it into his mouth, eyes and ears . . . throw his bare body into a pitch coffin, nail down the lid, and without confession or Holy Communion throw him into a grave quite disrespectfully. And they would not even place a cross over the grave, so that no one would know where the unfortunate martyr was buried.⁴⁸

Such seeming disregard for the ill and the dead further undermined governmental authority and deeply unsettled survivors.

After observing such horrific and dehumanizing treatment of bodies, political officials in both countries seized on the death of the leader as an opportunity to enact a ceremony that extravagantly fulfilled traditional notions of mourning. The fundamental advantage behind the use of a body in such tumultuous circumstances, Verdery contends, is that bodies are tangible, “unlike notions such as ‘patriotism,’” and can be “moved around, displayed, and strategically

⁴⁶ Frieden, “The Russian Cholera Epidemic,” 544.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 545.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 548.

located in specific places. Bodies have the advantage of concreteness that nonetheless transcends time, making past immediately present.”⁴⁹ A body is inherently malleable in its meaning, for while a single body is interpreted as having a single story of this single individual, its ultimate effectiveness in politics stems from “its ambiguity, its capacity to evoke a variety of understandings” as a political symbol.⁵⁰ After their countries endured tragedies undermining fundamental beliefs of life and death, political officials sought national reconciliation through stunning displays of mourning for their leaders.

⁴⁹ Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, 27.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 29.

“Half Circus, Half Heartbreak”: Lincoln’s Funeral Pageant

Howling, “*Sic semper tyrannis!*” John Wilkes Booth—a Confederate sympathizer—shot President Abraham Lincoln during a play at Ford’s Theatre on April 14, 1865.⁵¹ Booth then bellowed, “The South is avenged!” and escaped.⁵² Fellow theater attendees brought an unconscious Lincoln to a boarding house across the street where doctors attempted to save him. During the ten hours between the shooting and his death at 7:22 AM on April 15, Lincoln transformed from a “mortal to a martyred saint.”⁵³ As such, how could the country plan and execute a fitting funeral? Grief incapacitated his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, making her unable to state her wishes. The war dominated public consciousness, as General Robert E. Lee had surrendered only a week prior. Speaking on the floor of the Tennessee Senate, Chairman Wisner spoke of the tragedy, which “bows the nation low down in grief and mourning,” stating that Lincoln’s untimely end threatened the security of reconciliation. They had “looked to Mr. Lincoln as the man to draw this terrible war to an amicable end,” and “in whom alone they might have . . . pleaded successfully for mercy.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, Lincoln’s death was just one piece of a larger assassination scheme by a group determined to extinguish the Union’s leadership. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton took control of planning the funeral in addition to his duties of overseeing the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the long years of reconstruction.

⁵¹ The state motto of Virginia, meaning “thus always to tyrants.”

⁵² Albert J. Daggett to Miss Julie Tremen, April 15, 1865, Lincolniana Manuscript Collection, T1865.04.15 Misc, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library (hereafter cited as ALPL).

⁵³ James L. Swanson, *Bloody Crimes: The Chase for Jefferson Davis and the Death Pageant for Lincoln's Corpse* (New York: William Morrow/HarperCollins, 2010), 108.

⁵⁴ “The Washington Tragedy,” *The Nashville Daily Union*, April 18, 1865.

Overcoming these issues, Abraham Lincoln's funeral surpassed all previous American state funerals in both scale and spectacle. The veritable revolution in train technology created the opportunity for a funeral procession that ultimately evolved into a massive public production lasting nineteen days. Traversing nearly seventeen hundred miles, a specially outfitted train conveyed his body from Washington, D.C., to Springfield, Illinois. This trip retraced the route he took to Washington to be inaugurated as president. Over a million and a half people paid their final respects to his remains and over seven million more saw either the hearse or train conveying the body, allowing people to participate in the mourning process in a way which was heretofore inconceivable.⁵⁵

A clear precedent for the funeral of a president assassinated during the turmoil of war did not exist. Presidents William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor had died while in office, but of natural causes during peacetime; their funerals were far less elaborate. Lincoln's obsequies, however, took on the tenor of "half circus, half heartbreak," and were unlike any previous ceremony in the nation's history.⁵⁶ Despite the controversies surrounding Lincoln's presidency, "the whole nation was in mourning. It seemed as though everyone wished to do something to show how much he loved our President."⁵⁷ For some, such public demonstrations of grief meant practicing traditional mourning rituals, such as changing one's dress or draping the house in black crepe; for others, this manifested as viewing the remains or observing the train

⁵⁵ As the train only traveled through Northern states, I have focused my research on perceptions of the Northerners who were able to observe and participate in this process. Ralph G. Newman, "In This Sad World of Ours, Sorrow Comes to All: a Timetable for the Lincoln Funeral Train," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 58, no. 1 (Spring, 1965): 5, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40190423>.

⁵⁶ Newman, "In This Sad World," 5.

⁵⁷ Edmond Beall, "Recollections of the Assassination and Funeral of Abraham Lincoln," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical* 5, no. 4 (January, 1913): 488. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40193791>.

conveying the body to Springfield, Illinois. For instance, the town of Sing Sing, NY, built a memorial arch over the railway tracks along which Lincoln's train passed, epitomizing the whole theme of the funeral: "We Mourn a Nation's Loss."⁵⁸

For others, it meant defending Lincoln's honor—in the fortnight following his death, over two hundred people had been "shot, stabbed, lynched, or beaten to death for making anti-Lincoln statements or praising his assassin."⁵⁹ Some citizens focused on a desire for enacting revenge against Lincoln's killer.⁶⁰ "It is impossible for me to describe the scenes as they occurred here," Moses Sandford wrote to his friend Johnny on April 17, 1865, from Washington, D.C. "Business is entirely suspended and the Whole City is draped in mourning. . . . Crowds on every corner and [on] 10th [Street] it was one solid mass of excigted [sic] men flourishing knives and revolvers and Yelling down with the Traitors instead of hunting for them."⁶¹ Such frustrated anger reflects extreme emotions felt by some after the "savior" of the Civil War was brutally killed on the eve of victory.

The first of the multiple funeral processions for Lincoln occurred in Washington, D.C., on April 19, 1865. The proliferation of mourning decorations and the thousands sleeping on the streets the night before in order to participate in the "saddest, most profoundly moving spectacle ever staged in the history of the Republic" transformed the city.⁶² At a final cost of

⁵⁸ Swanson, *Bloody Crimes*, 233.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁶⁰ John Wilkes Booth evaded capture until April 26 when Union soldiers killed him. For a full account of Booth's escape and death, see James L. Swanson's *Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006).

⁶¹ T1865.04.17 Misc. 2, ALPL.

⁶² Swanson, *Manhunt*, 213.

\$28,965.31, Lincoln's funeral in Washington, D.C., alone surpassed that of any other in the history of the nation in its attempt to honor the death of a man who had led the country through war.⁶³ Such a hefty sum speaks to the unrestrained effort of government officials to demonstrate the nation's devotion to the fallen leader, making a political statement during a change of command. This spectacle would continue for over a fortnight as the train carried Lincoln's body to his final resting place in Springfield, Illinois, though no known tally exists for the costs expended for the totality of the journey.

It is unknown how many saw Lincoln's body, but reports from individual towns give some sense of the number. In East Albany, NY, the body lay in the state capitol for viewing during one of its many stops while traveling to Illinois. More than four thousand people came to view him per hour, even in the dead of night.⁶⁴ This figure is particularly remarkable given the vehement opposition to Lincoln's actions as president in both the North and the South as the Civil War death toll increased. Nevertheless, "their common participation in his funeral expressed and reinforced their common identification with the nation."⁶⁵ The unexpected and violent loss of the president caused people to put aside their disagreements. "Had he not been stricken down," John Egar wrote in 1865, "he would not have passed into history with the same nimbus of glory that now surrounds his memory."⁶⁶

⁶³ For more information about the specific costs associated with the Washington funeral, see Swanson, *Bloody Crimes*, 284-86. This comes to over \$402,000 in 2011 using Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers. See <http://oregonstate.edu/cla/polisci/download-conversion-factors>.

⁶⁴ Swanson, *Bloody Crimes*, 234.

⁶⁵ Barry Schwartz, "Mourning and the Making of a Sacred Symbol: Durkheim and the Lincoln Assassination," *Social Forces* 70, no. 2 (December, 1991): 360. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2580243>.

⁶⁶ John H. Egar, *The Martyr-President* (Leavenworth, KS: Bulletin Job Printing Establishment, 1865), 14. As quoted in Schwartz, "Mourning and the Making," 345. Lincoln died at the peak of his career, and so popular memory of

As ordered by the War Department, time cards for each leg of the journey were printed and widely distributed by each rail company whose tracks were used by the funeral train. They detailed where the body would be, often down to the minute, so that people would know when to gather by the tracks to watch the train pass.⁶⁷ Some who saw the body or watched the train pass wrote that it was one of the most memorable days of their lives. Others took to extraordinary means in order to catch a glimpse of the “sacred pageant,” such as wounded soldier L. S. Griswold. He and the other patients at United States General Hospital in York, PA, were not issued passes to leave so that they might see the train. “I leave it to your own vivid imagination,” Griswold later wrote to a friend in 1890, “to picture the indescribable utterances of woe.... I for one was ready to smash a hole through that fence [surrounding the hospital] and see that sacred train, let the consequences be what they might.”⁶⁸ And so he did.

Contemporary accounts of Lincoln’s lengthy funeral journey stress the diversity of the mourners, their passionate displays of emotion, and their sheer numbers. For many, Lincoln embodied the spirit of opportunity in America, for any man, no matter his origins, could

him has also, to some extent, frozen at this juncture at which he had just successfully guided the nation through its bloodiest war. His time as president did not include the trying years of attempting to piece the country back together. Lincoln’s popularity soared after his death and he continues to be ranked by both scholars and the American public as one of the nation’s greatest presidents. C-SPAN conducted presidential leadership surveys in 2000 and 2009, asking historians to rank each president in ten leadership categories ranging from “international relations” to “pursued equal justice for all.” Lincoln finished first both times. See “C-SPAN Survey of Presidential Leadership—Overall Rankings,” <http://legacy.c-span.org/PresidentialSurvey/default.aspx>. Since 1999, Gallup has sponsored eight polls asking participants who they believe to be “the greatest president.” Lincoln won in four and tied with John F. Kennedy in a fifth. See Frank Newport, “Americans Say Reagan Is the Greatest U.S. President,” GALLUP, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/146183/Americans-Say-Reagan-Greatest-President.aspx>.

⁶⁷ See, for example, “Cleveland and Erie Rail Road Time Card For Special Train, Friday, April 28th, 1865, Conveying Remains of Abraham Lincoln, Late President of the United States, and Escort.” Lincolniana Collection, LB-1460, ALPL.

⁶⁸ L. S. Griswold, “When Lincoln’s Funeral Car Passed” in *Tribune Monthly: True Stories of the War for the Union: Personal Experiences and Observations of Union Soldiers in the Several Campaigns*. (Chicago: Library of Tribune Extras. March 1893, Volume V, no. 3.), 38. ALPL.

conceivably become president. The sweeping participation of the people, so that “every class, race, and condition of society was represented,” reflected this possibility, inherent in the American political system.⁶⁹ It was “the people’s funeral”⁷⁰ for a man of humble origins who once reduced his upbringing to, “the short and simple annals of the poor.”⁷¹ Newspaper articles frequently commented on the fervent participation of the poor as well as the African-American population with language that likened such a devoted following to that of a religious leader. “We, as a people feel more than all others that we are bereaved,” the pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Troy, New York, asserted. “We had learned to love Mr. Lincoln. . . . We looked up to him as our savior, our deliverer.”⁷²

Others also drew parallels between Lincoln and Christ, particularly as Lincoln died on Good Friday. “One man has died for the people,” one preacher in Providence, Rhode Island, said to his congregation that Easter, “in order that the whole nation might not perish.”⁷³ Funeral speeches and newspaper articles emphasized his tragic sacrifice for the nation on the eve of victory, but he had not abandoned his country for, “He still lives in the HEARTS of the PEOPLE,” as mourning ribbons printed for the funeral procession in Washington avowed.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ William Turner Columbus Coggeshall, *The Lincoln Memorial: From Springfield to Washington, 1861 as President Elect; and From Washington to Springfield, 1865, as President Martyred* (Ohio: Ohio State Journal, 1865). http://books.google.com/books?id=9f_s-CHjYn8C111.

⁷⁰ J. W. Becker and William S. Porter, “The Lincoln Funeral Train.” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 9, no. 3 (October, 1916): 319. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40194188>.

⁷¹ In this, Lincoln quoted a line from Thomas Gray’s 1750 “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.” Donald, *Lincoln*, 19.

⁷² Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 157.

⁷³ *Christian Recorder*, April 22, 1865, May 6, 1865. As quoted in Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 156.

⁷⁴ Swanson, *Bloody Crimes*, 190. The banner draped across Lincoln’s old Springfield law office stated, “He lives in the hearts of his people.”

Some interpreted the timing of his death in a spiritual manner, believing that his work on Earth was finished, and so, like Christ, God recalled Lincoln to heaven.⁷⁵

Lincoln's body was often described using imagery and symbolism typical for saints, and his remains themselves and items related to his death garnered national notice and became a sort of social commodity. After honoring Mary Todd Lincoln's request to have a lock of her husband's hair, the doctors conducting the autopsy each collected one as well, a memento from the President they had served in death.⁷⁶ People hunted for souvenirs from his life, such as those who took personal items from the White House in the confusion following the assassination, as well as souvenirs from the death itself, including pieces of blood-splattered bed linens and clothing from those who witnessed the assassination or attended to Lincoln afterward.⁷⁷ "Such a life and character," James A. Garfield said at the one-year anniversary of Lincoln's assassination, "will be treasured forever as the sacred possession of the American people and of mankind."⁷⁸ Mary soon forbade photography of the corpse and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton sought to destroy any plates or prints before her wishes went public.

It was not solely Mrs. Lincoln's wishes that inspired this prohibition, but the reality that despite the embalming process and the number of undertakers who accompanied the body,

⁷⁵ See, for example, speeches and sermons given around the country at Lincoln's death. Many edited collections of these exist, such as Andrew Boyd, *A Memorial Lincoln Bibliography: Being an Account of Books, Eulogies, Sermons, Portraits, Engravings, Medals, etc., Published upon Abraham Lincoln, Sixteenth President of the United States, Assassinated Good Friday, April 14, 1865* (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1870). See also: David B. Chesebrough, *No Sorrow like Our Sorrow: Northern Protestant Ministers and the Assassination of Lincoln* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1994).

⁷⁶ Swanson, *Bloody Crimes*, 135.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁷⁸ James A. Garfield, "Remarks of the Honorable James A. Garfield of Ohio in the House of Representatives, April 14, 1866, in Memory of Abraham Lincoln" (Washington, D.C.: Hudson Taylor, 1866), 3. ALPL. President Garfield also died at the hand of an assassin in 1881.

the methods were not advanced enough to prevent decay. Although Lincoln was not canonized in a traditional, religious manner, he was frequently depicted in such terms, thus undermining one of the central tenants of sainthood in that the body does not decay like other mortals.⁷⁹ During the funeral train journey, General Edward Townsend, unaware of her wishes, allowed photography, later writing, "It seemed to me the picture would be gratifying, a grand view of what thousands saw and what thousands could not see."⁸⁰ Now housed in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois, some of these items remain popular exhibit pieces. In 1866, the Union Pacific Railroad Company purchased the train car that bore Lincoln's body back to Springfield.⁸¹ They preserved much of the train car's décor while transfiguring it into a luxury traveling car for the company's executives; it was a rather macabre, though nonetheless effective, status symbol, continuing the spectacle that began at Ford's Theatre. It remained in the company's possession until the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis at which "thousands and thousands of people flocked to see it. . . . Many wept tears of grief, as the memory of the grandest, the most noble man the world has ever known, came back to them."⁸²

The funeral train journey retraced Lincoln's 1861 travels from his home to the nation's capital to be inaugurated as president. The unprecedented first trip, in which he stopped at

⁷⁹ Swanson, *Bloody Crimes*, 235.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 236. Stanton oversaw the destruction of the negative and its prints, but secretly kept one print for himself. Before 1952, historians believed all photographs of Lincoln's corpse had been destroyed until Ronald Reitveld, a fourteen-year-old Lincoln enthusiast, discovered a copy in the archives. See: Bob Zeller, *The Blue and Gray in Black and White: A History of Civil War Photography* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 169.

⁸¹ "The Historic Lincoln Car," L2 H6731, ALPL.

⁸² *Ibid.*, Thomas Lowry, a private citizen from Minneapolis, purchased the car after the fair. A prairie fire destroyed it in 1911; the Lincoln Museum owns a surviving fragment. Conversation with James Cornelius, curator of the Lincoln collection at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, July 17, 2012.

various towns to make speeches and greet his countrymen, forged a bond between president and people, but he traveled upon it as an untested leader. Rumors of assassination attempts plagued his inaugural trip, eventually causing him to go into hiding. The press ridiculed his secret night trip from Harrisburg, PA, to Baltimore despite the assassination plots, leading to ridicule and embarrassment; Lincoln later stated he regretted making the decision to travel in hiding for part of the trip, for it undermined his staunch image of steadfastness.⁸³

Four years later, a train carrying the martyr-president's remains left the capital with the whole nation watching. Although his funeral train did not and could not change the fact that many Southerners and some Northerners believed him to be a despot, this display of mass mourning endeavored to unify the North. This display in which so many partook, helped secure Lincoln's legacy among the greatest leaders in America's history. He remains a venerated figure in both America and the world and his untimely death and the magnificent nature of his funeral procession allowed for millions of people to participate in mourning his loss, not solely as a funeral for one man but as a pageant of grief planned by the Secretary of War for a country torn asunder by the war.⁸⁴

⁸³ Donald, *Lincoln*, 279.

⁸⁴ Abraham's son, Willie, died during his father's presidency in 1862. Originally buried in Washington, he was exhumed and transported to Springfield along with his father's body.

“Splendid and Pathetic Scenes”: Alexander III’s Funeral Pageant

Unlike the American presidential system in which popular vote elected leaders, tsars claimed divine ordination. A tsar’s passing thus called for a ceremony that reinforced the autocracy as it transferred to the next tsar. Though their European dynastic counterparts distinguished between the “body politic” and the “body natural” of the leader, the Russian autocracy resisted such a bifurcation, placing even more emphasis on the body of a deceased leader.⁸⁵ As historian Catherine Merridale contends, the tsar “was not bound by politics. Instead, he was a semidivine ruler, and his connection with the people, they were supposed to believe, was mystical, spiritual, and beyond challenge.”⁸⁶ The body of a tsar, the physical manifestation of divine rule, thus became the “focus of the nation’s attention.”⁸⁷

Although Alexander died in a less spectacular fashion than Lincoln on October 20, 1894,⁸⁸ at his resort in the Crimea, newspapers across the globe cast his final hours with the saintly glow of martyrdom. It was believed he sacrificed his health in his efforts to remain “steadfastly an enemy of war.”⁸⁹ Many Europeans and countrymen alike referred to him as the peace-loving tsar because, “Russia lived in peace and all of Europe lived peacefully” during his

⁸⁵ Trice, “The ‘Body Politic,’” 9.

⁸⁶ Merridale, *Night of Stone*, 28.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁸ Except as noted, Russian dates are recorded in the Julian, or Old Style (OS), calendar in the body of the essay, which lagged twelve days behind the Western Gregorian calendar in the nineteenth century and thirteen days in the twentieth until 1918. Dates for newspapers are listed in both styles in the footnotes.

⁸⁹ “The Emperor of Russia,” *Harper’s Weekly* (New York), October 29 OS/November 10, 1894. As Alexander’s government sought so fervently to maintain its international reputation in the years surrounding his death and due to his internationally reputation as one of Europe’s “peace-keepers,” I have focused much more on the international press’ commentary on his death and funeral. See, for example, “Death of the Czar: The Last Scenes, Reception in the Capitals,” *The Belfast Newsletter*, October 21 OS/November 2, 1894; “Imperator’ Aleksandr’ III,” *Novoe vremia* (St. Petersburg), October 21 OS/November 2, 1894; “News of the Week,” *The Spectator* (London), October 22 OS/November 3, 1894.

thirteen-year reign.⁹⁰ Although transporting the body of the deceased leader by boat back to St. Petersburg remained the quickest option, officials chose to have a special funeral train car convey Alexander III's body by land across thirteen hundred miles, stopping along the way so that the masses might view it. His lengthy funeral, beginning in the Crimea and ending with his internment in the SS Peter and Paul Cathedral in St. Petersburg, was portrayed as a sort of beatification. Reports concerning Alexander III's health had already begun to appear in newspapers in 1888, after he survived a deadly train crash near Borki in October of that year, located in present-day Ukraine. Historians believe he suffered undetected internal injuries when the roof of his train car collapsed, thus causing the initial onset of chronic interstitial nephritis (granular atrophy of the kidneys).⁹¹ Doctors did not notice signs of his kidney disease until January 1894. He weakened slowly over the next several months, worsened by bouts of pneumonia and bronchitis.⁹² "It was like seeing a magnificent building crumble," wrote one of his wife's ladies-in-waiting.⁹³

British historian and correspondent for *The London Times*, Charles Lowe published a biography of Alexander III in 1895 that remains one of the most thorough accounts of the funeral process. Touted as one of the world's "most eminent historians" of the time for his work on other European leaders, Lowe was one of two international correspondents present at

⁹⁰ S. Iu. Vitte, *Vospominaniia vol 1: 1849-1894* (Moskva: Skif-Aleks, 1994), 440. Originally published in exile outside Russia in 1921.

⁹¹ V. G. Chernukha, "Aleksandr III," in *Aleksandr Tretii: Vospominaniia, Dnevnik, Pis'ma* (Sankt-Peterburg: Pushkinskii fond, 2001), 37.

⁹² I. E. Ryzhenko, *Aleksandr III v Gatchine* (Sankt-Peterburg: Liki Rossii, 2011), 180.

⁹³ Elizabeth Naryshkin-Kurakin, *Under Three Tsars: The Memoirs of The Lady in Waiting, Elizabeth Naryshkin-Kurakin* (New York, E. P. Dutton & Co.: 1931). As quoted in Coryne Hall, *Little Mother of Russia: A Biography of the Empress Marie Feodorovna* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 2001), 160.

Alexander's coronation following the assassination of his father, Alexander II.⁹⁴ Lowe continued observing Alexander's reign until his death, and possessed a unique connection to intimate details of the tsar's life as a "warm friend" of the tsar's cousin, the Prince of Bulgaria.⁹⁵ Lowe's account of Alexander's life and funeral made the details available for the first time to an English-speaking audience. He described events after Alexander's death as a "grand spectacular funeral-drama in five main acts" in which the dead tsar was essentially "canonised."⁹⁶ Government officials planned a spectacle with the intentions of uniting the Russian people while simultaneously presenting the autocracy as both august and resilient to an international audience.

Although the government had announced Alexander III's illness and need for rest in Livadia, his resort in the Crimea, his death came as a surprise. His death at the age of forty-nine seemed relatively young for a tsar in recent memory—his father died at the hand of an assassin at age sixty-two. Additionally, many believed the tsar was miraculously blessed: he and his family had survived the train derailment at Borki. This took place on October 17, 1888, the same place where a plague ended soon after locals paraded a holy icon two centuries earlier on October 17, 1655. Alexander personally believed the "holiness of the Russian people" allowed for the royal family's survival.⁹⁷ In his seminal work analyzing rituals and ceremony in imperial Russia, Richard Wortman argues that the popularity of icons grew dramatically in the decades

⁹⁴ Rossiter Johnson, ed., *The Great Events by Famous Historians* (London: National Alumni, 1905), 2. <http://books.google.com/books?id=TSGHZ-oGfIIC&dq>

⁹⁵ "New Publications: The Late Czar Alexander III of Russia, By Charles Lowe," *The New York Times*, January 6, 1895."

⁹⁶ Charles Lowe, *Alexander III of Russia* (London: W. Heinemann, 1895), 290.

⁹⁷ Wortman, *From Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II*, 310.

following emancipation, and so the tsar's public acknowledgement of the power of icons and the prayers of his people brought him closer to them; this invocation of a miracle at Borki "suggested a loss of trust in the forces of history and actions in defiance of reason and history, realizing the unbelievable."⁹⁸ On October 16, 1894, just days before Alexander succumbed to illness, the St. Petersburg newspaper *Nedel'naia khronika voskhoda* (*Sunrise Weekly Chronicle*) printed an announcement for services the next day to rejoice and give prayers of thanksgiving for "the miraculous deliverance of HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY and his family" from the train crash as well as to "pray for the healing of the SOVEREIGN EMPEROR from his illness."⁹⁹ The people's belief in the miracle at Borki accompanied the tsar until his death in 1894.

The press published frequent articles on the tsar's declining health. An article "Solemn prayer service for the Emperor's health" ran in the October 8, 1894, issue of *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* (*Saint Petersburg News*, the official newspaper founded in 1727 by the Imperial Academy of Science), without detailing the type or severity of his illness.¹⁰⁰ Instead, the article focused on who attended the service at St. Isaac's Cathedral and the reaction of the crowd, stating that, during the prayer, "everyone, as if one person, fell to their knees. Many in the church wept."¹⁰¹ When more information became available about the tsar's status, the paper printed updates of his illness, sometimes including how his condition changed from hour

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Nedel'naia khronika voskhoda* (St. Petersburg), October 16 OS/October 28, 1894. I am indebted to the work of my advisor, Louise McReynolds, whose book remains the authority on the press in Imperial Russia, allowing me to understand the context in which these papers functioned. See Louise McReynolds, *The News Under Russia's Old Regime: The Development of a Mass-Circulation Press* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.)

¹⁰⁰ McReynolds, *The News Under Russia's Old Regime*, 19.

¹⁰¹ *Sankt Peterburgskie vedomosti* (St. Petersburg), October 8 OS/October 20, 1894.

to hour, as well as the names of the doctors treating him. Russia's technological revolution allowed for telegrams from correspondents reporting from the sick room to be sent to newspapers, then to be consolidated, printed, and distributed throughout the empire. Such advances in technology allowed for "live" updates on the health of the tsar, letting people from all corners of the nation experience it for themselves.

After Alexander's passing was made public, the cause of death was portrayed as something akin to martyrdom. The newspaper *Novoe Vremia* (*The New Time*) wrote, "his tireless devotion and extreme attention to his duties broke down his health."¹⁰² In 1895, Lowe claimed that the "fatal chill which carried him off was due to his paternal tenderness."¹⁰³ Doctors had informed him that they could treat some of the symptoms of nephritis, but ultimately that the kidney disease was not curable. Advising him to rest and stay in a warmer climate, doctors suggested he stay at Livadia. Alexander, however, did not like treatment and "paid no attention to his illness . . . and attached little importance to the doctors' advice and instructions."¹⁰⁴ An example of this is when he rescued his son, the Grand Duke George, from a bog. Both were taken ill, but Alexander disobeyed doctors' orders—"autocrat to the very last"—and worsened his own condition when he visited his son in the middle of the night, crossing through the drafty palace.¹⁰⁵ He died at 2:15 PM on October 20, 1894.

Eight days later, newspapers published his official cause of death after doctors completed the autopsy, citing "chronic interstitial nephritis, concurrent damage to the heart

¹⁰² "Imperator' Aleksandr' III," *Novoe vremia* (St. Petersburg), October 21 OS/November 2, 1894.

¹⁰³ Lowe, *Alexander III of Russia*, 280.

¹⁰⁴ Vitte, *Vospominaniia vol 1: 1849-1894*, 390.

¹⁰⁵ Lowe, *Alexander III of Russia*, 280-87.

and blood vessels, hemorrhaging in the left lung with sustained inflammation.”¹⁰⁶ They soon embalmed his body, but not entirely successfully. The published autopsy report went on to give the specific measurements of the deceased tsar’s organs, allowing readers to understand the full extent of the tsar’s final illness and the progression of his passing. By making these details public, the doctors emphasized their inability to have saved the tsar and cemented the succession for his son, Nicholas II. This fascination with the minutiae surrounding the body of the tsar placed emphasis on the absolute certainty of his death prior to his funeral, especially important in light of the sheer number of dead from the famine and cholera epidemic around which rumors persisted that several were buried alive.

Although the tsar’s illness worsened over a period of several months, no one had preemptively made funeral arrangements. To announce his death to the locals and reporters gathered outside the palace, the cruiser *Pamiat’ Merkuria* (Memory of Mercury) fired shot after shot before officials sent telegrams to notify the government in St. Petersburg.¹⁰⁷ After Alexander’s death, his sister-in-law and her husband, the Princess and Prince of Wales, organized private ceremonies for the family at the chapel at Livadia twice daily until officials in St. Petersburg planned the obsequies.¹⁰⁸

The second act in the prolonged funeral rituals entailed the journey of the body from the church at Livadia to the *Pamiat’ Merkuria*.¹⁰⁹ Helping carry his father’s coffin, Nicholas II

¹⁰⁶ “Segodnia, ” *Novoe vremia* (St. Petersburg), October 28 OS/November 9, 1894.

¹⁰⁷ “Livadia” *Novoe vremia* (St. Petersburg), October 26 OS/November 7, 1894.

¹⁰⁸ Hall, *Little Mother of Russia*, 164.

¹⁰⁹ “Livadia” *Novoe vremia* (St. Petersburg), October 26 OS/November 7, 1894.

made his first public appearance as the new tsar.¹¹⁰ A correspondent for *Novoe Vremia* wrote of the people's extreme grief as the coffin emerged from the palace.¹¹¹ "The whole road was lined with thousands of weeping people who fell on their knees and crossed themselves reverently as their beloved Emperor was carried by them for the last time," the Princess of Wales later wrote.¹¹² Prior to his death, Alexander intended to inspect the warship, but instead the cruiser transported his body to Sevastopol. Afterward, the coffin bearing his remains traversed by train "thirteen hundred miles across the entire breadth of the empire to St. Petersburg."¹¹³ Making its way from Sevastopol to Moscow and finally to St. Petersburg, the funeral train stopped at various points along the route, including Borki.

The prolonged funeral train journey granted thousands of people the opportunity to mourn for Alexander, bolstering the prestige of the autocracy and centrality of Orthodoxy.¹¹⁴ "Persons of all classes," *The New York Times* reported, "are hurrying by the thousands to the towns at which the funeral train will halt for the celebration of masses."¹¹⁵ International correspondents dwelt on the extravagance of the proceedings. "Alexander III of Russia is being conducted to his last resting-place," a correspondent for London's *The Graphic* explained, "with a pomp which throws far into the shade all other royal or imperial obsequies of which we have

¹¹⁰ "Telegramy, 26-og oktiabrya," *Novoe vremia* (St. Petersburg), October 27 OS/November 8, 1894.

¹¹¹ "Livadia" *Novoe vremia* (St. Petersburg), October 27 OS/November 8, 1894.

¹¹² Hall, *Little Mother of Russia*, 165.

¹¹³ *Novoe vremia* (St. Petersburg), October 26 OS/November 7, 1894.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ "Russia Draped in Mourning," *The New York Times*, November 10, 1894 (October 29 OS).

any record.”¹¹⁶ The international press lavished attention upon the illness, death, and funeral of Alexander, an emperor credited with preserving peace in Europe.

The third act of the grand funeral drama commenced when the body arrived in Moscow for ceremonies in the Kremlin’s Archangel Cathedral. All of the major buildings surrounding the train station were draped with “mourning flags and festoons of mourning fabric.”¹¹⁷ American correspondents noted the complete transformation of Moscow into mourning, including “black framed portraits of Alexander III . . . in hundreds of windows”¹¹⁸ and “funeral arches and other signs of mourning multiply from hour to hour.”¹¹⁹ Moscow was “sparing nothing in its efforts to show its loyalty and sorrow.”¹²⁰ After a journey of nine hundred miles, Alexander’s body returned to the city of his coronation to be met by thousands “unable to restrain their emotion. Tears were seen rolling down the cheeks of noble ladies. Sobs broke on the ear almost rhythmically with the cadences of the sacred music.”¹²¹ Alexander’s death proved a boon for merchants selling funeral goods, for his death necessitated the purchasing of black mourning fabric to decorate both the city’s people and buildings, especially as the official mourning period lasted for three months.¹²² Almost immediately after Alexander’s death, advertisements

¹¹⁶ “Topic of the Week: The Czar’s Funeral,” *The Graphic* (London), November 17, 1894 (November 5 OS).

¹¹⁷ “Traurnoe ubranstvo Moskvyy,” *Russkii Listok* (Moscow), October 31 OS/November 12, 1894.

¹¹⁸ “Russia Draped in Mourning,” *The New York Times*, November 10, 1894 (October 29 OS).

¹¹⁹ Russia in Mourning: Elaborate Funeral Preparations at St. Petersburg and Moscow,” *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1894 (October 29 OS).

¹²⁰ “Funeral of Alexander III: The Body of the Dead Czar on the Way to St. Petersburg,” *The New York Times*, November 9, 1894 (October 28 OS).

¹²¹ A Special Correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, as quoted in Lowe, *Alexander the III of Russia*, 295.

¹²² Merridale, *Night of Stone*, 27.

appeared in newspapers, including large ones on the first page of *Novoe Vremia*, announcing “the latest fabrics for mourning dress!”¹²³ Newspaper accounts, such as an article, “Moscow’s Funeral Decorations,” detailed specific mourning decorations for individual buildings and residences.¹²⁴ Mourning for the tsar became a sort of social currency and demonstration of status. Such lavish displays of public grieving inherently entailed a concerted effort to be seen as a devoted mourner, whether the mourning appeared on one’s body, shop, or house.

The fourth act entailed the most extensive procession: arrival in St. Petersburg. “I recall, as if it were today,” Sergei Witte wrote a quarter-century later, “how the train arrived; there were hordes of people at the station, and all of Nevskii Prospect, down to St. Isaac’s Cathedral, was teeming with people.”¹²⁵ The procession comprised “thirteen sections, subdivided into one hundred and fifty-six distinct groups.”¹²⁶ Although no record of total cost exists, the city’s Municipal Council approved 50,000 rubles to “drape” the city and voted for “unlimited credit” to pay for the funeral and forthcoming monument.¹²⁷

Press coverage sought to downplay the controversy and turmoil of Alexander’s reign, focusing instead on the people’s united effort to mourn for their leader. Although people throughout the empire criticized his rule, such ill feelings did not appear in accounts of the

¹²³ “Chernye Materii!” *Novoe vremia* (St. Petersburg), October 27 OS/November 8, 1894.

¹²⁴ “Traurnoe ubranstvo Moskv,” *Russkii Listok* (Moscow), October 31 OS/November 12, 1894.

¹²⁵ Vitte, *Vospominaniia vol 2: 1894-Oktiabr’ 1905*, 3.

¹²⁶ Lowe, *Alexander the III of Russia*, 298.

¹²⁷ “Funeral of Alexander III: The Body of the Dead Czar on the Way to St. Petersburg,” *The New York Times*, November 9, 1894 (October 28 OS). This is approximately \$25,000 USD in 1892, coming to over \$609,000 in 2011, using Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers. See <http://oregonstate.edu/cla/polisci/download-conversion-factors>. For the conversion rates from rubles to dollars, see Smith, “The Famine in Russia,” in which 150,000,000 rubles converts to approximately 75,000,000 USD.

events in Moscow but occasionally surfaced in reports of proceedings in St. Petersburg. As the capital of the Russian Empire, St. Petersburg residents were more intimately acquainted with the tsar, his ruling strategies, and the workings of the government. “If the greatness of a monarch might be inferred from the magnificence of his funeral,” Lowe wrote in 1895, “then certainly the Tsar Peacekeeper may well take rank as one of the greatest rulers who ever swayed a scepter or sheathed a sword.”¹²⁸ Yet, despite this dramatic display of mourning, it “failed to evoke the devotion and exaltation that had appeared in Moscow.”¹²⁹ The Minister of Interior, Ivan Durnovo, left the funeral procession early in order to instruct the police on “how the public should conduct themselves” and how the police should respond in case demonstrations against Alexander broke out.¹³⁰ *The Spectator*, a British magazine, described the St. Petersburg events as “magnificent and tedious,” perhaps tinged with a “note of artificialness.”¹³¹ Government officials designed this final procession to affirm autocracy and Orthodoxy, but observations by journalists not beholden to the Russian government—or employed by official newspapers—call into question its ultimate effectiveness, though their accounts must be tempered by an understanding of the press as a business and their necessity of selling papers with popular and interesting stories to remain afloat.

Despite the embalming, Alexander III’s body began to deteriorate along the journey. According to the tenets of sainthood, the condition of a saintly body does not decompose in the

¹²⁸ Lowe, *Alexander the III of Russia*, 290.

¹²⁹ Richard S. Wortman, *From Alexander II to the Abdication of Nicholas II*, vol. 2 of *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 300.

¹³⁰ Vitte, *Vospominaniia vol 2: 1894-Oktiabr’ 1905*, 4.

¹³¹ “The Funeral of the Czar,” *The Spectator*, November 24, 1894 (November 12 OS).

same manner as a regular human. Yet it was “visibly rotting” upon its arrival in St.

Petersburg.¹³² In her description of Alexander’s funeral, Merridale argues that this decay was kept secret, for its “purpose was not to portray the czar as an ordinary human being.”¹³³

According to Orthodox custom, family members kissed an icon clasped in the deceased’s hands and were thus intimately acquainted with the condition of the remains. Some obliquely referred to it in letters, such as the Duke of York, who wrote, “It gave me quite a shock when I saw his dear face so close to mine when I stooped down, he looks so beautiful and peaceful, but of course his face has changed very much, it is a fortnight today.”¹³⁴ American newspapers also mentioned the state of the body. On October 29, 1894, *The Washington Post* reported that the body’s period of lying in state in St. Petersburg was to be shortened by three days: “This haste is unprecedented, but it is stated that the funeral must be held soon, owing to the delay in embalming.”¹³⁵ The focus on the body itself—though ignoring its decay—reflects, as Merridale goes on to argue, the “Orthodox preoccupation with matter, the bond that unites the soul with mortal flesh, accorded an almost sacred importance to human tissue, bone, hair, and muscle.”¹³⁶

The journey of Alexander’s body reached its crescendo with the fifth and final act of the funeral, the interment of the body at Peter and Paul Cathedral in St. Petersburg, the burial

¹³² Merridale, *Night of Stone*, 27.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹³⁴ Hall, *Little Mother of Russia*, 167.

¹³⁵ “Russia in Mourning: Elaborate Funeral Preparations at St. Petersburg and Moscow,” *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1894 (October 29 OS).

¹³⁶ Merridale, *Night of Stone*, 27.

place of tsars since Peter the Great. The international response to the funeral proved astounding: France sent five thousand wreaths, a symbol of the mourning for a leader who brokered the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894. Hundreds of foreign dignitaries and nearly seventy foreign princes attended the burial.¹³⁷ Lowe wrote that the burial “utterly beggared all that had gone before it in its indescribable magnificence and moving power.”¹³⁸ Allowing for repeated public displays of mourning at these “splendid and pathetic scenes,” the funeral rituals for Alexander had stretched longer than a fortnight.¹³⁹ Alexander’s wife Marie Feodorovna “courageously” endured them until the final prayer during the interment, at which her “nerves were unable to bear it anymore,” and cried, “Enough! Enough! Enough!”¹⁴⁰ The funeral’s display of splendor demonstrated the monarchy’s resiliency and grandeur to both Russia and the world. Surpassing most of his actions as tsar, Alexander’s grandiose funerals became one of the most impressive aspects of his reign.

In contrast to Lincoln, however, the torrent of grief and admiration for Alexander did not continue after his death. A detailed analysis of Alexander’s policies falls outside the scope of this paper, but the notes of discontent in St. Petersburg allude to the ultimate failure of his reign, foreshadowing the eventual end of the Russian autocracy. This next-to-last monarch was not raised or educated to be tsar—his older brother should have occupied the throne, but died in 1865—and one of his teachers became “horrified” at the thought of Alexander’s new status

¹³⁷ “Russia in Mourning: Elaborate Funeral Preparations at St. Petersburg and Moscow,” *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1894 (October 29 OS).

¹³⁸ Lowe, *Alexander III of Russia*, 299.

¹³⁹ “The Dead Czar’s Funeral Procession,” *The Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle* (Portsmouth, England), Saturday, November 10, 1894 (October 29 OS).

¹⁴⁰ Vitte, *Vospominaniia vol 2: 1894-Oktiabr’ 1905*, 6.

of heir-apparent while another “fell into ‘complete despair,’ having heard from him ‘not a single bright thought nor even one sensible question.’”¹⁴¹ As Russian historian Valentina Chernukha writes, Alexander became a “tragic figure in Russian history. Equally tragic were the consequences of his thirteen-year reign. The saddest thing is that history probably could have unfolded rather differently, and the impact of the Revolution, which was apparently already inevitable, could have been softened by a more flexible and progressive policy.”¹⁴² Yet Alexander was neither flexible nor progressive. His father’s policies included the intelligentsia in his reforming efforts, whereas Alexander’s steered them to questioning and ultimately opposing his nature of rule, the consequences of which became clearer during Nicholas II’s reign.¹⁴³ Chernukha goes on to explain that in 1882, his uncles discussed the “breakdown” of Alexander II’s plan for Russia in Alexander III’s decisions, theorizing that the explanation for these actions could be found in Alexander III’s childhood and his unresolved “hurt feelings because his parents did not give him enough attention. ‘Hence, he has an unconscious desire to modify everything that exists, if only to return to something that existed once upon a time and is now forgotten.’”¹⁴⁴ Whether or not his uncles’ rationalization for Alexander’s dismantling of his father’s reforms holds true, their evaluation of his actions elucidates the tenor of his reign.

¹⁴¹ B. N. Chicherin, *Vospominaniia: Zemstvo i Moskovskaia дума* (Moscow, 1934), 109. As quoted in Valentina Grigorievna Chernukha, “Emperor Alexander III, 1881-1894,” in *Emperors and Empresses of Russia: Rediscovering the Romanovs*, eds. Donald J. Raleigh and Akhmed Akhmedovich Iskenderov, 334-368. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 338.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 336.

¹⁴³ For a more robust discussion of Alexander’s reign, see: Valentina Grigorievna Chernukha, “Emperor Alexander III, 1881-1894,” in *Emperors and Empresses of Russia: Rediscovering the Romanovs*, eds. Donald J. Raleigh and Akhmed Akhmedovich Iskenderov, 334-368. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), while Heidi W. Whelan’s *Alexander III and the State Council: Bureaucracy and Counter-reform in Russia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982) provides an excellent look at the relationship between Alexander and his government.

¹⁴⁴ D. A. Miliutin, *Dnevnik*, vol. 4 (Moscow, 1947), 155. As quoted in Chernukha, Alexander III,” 359.

Alexander later proclaimed in a letter to his brother that he would “never permit limitations on autocratic rule,” a belief that dictated his government and ultimately deepened the split between government and people.¹⁴⁵ The following quote by Alexander in 1881 best embodies his disdain for the people and their desires for increased participation in government: “Constitution? Is the tsar of Russia supposed to take an oath to a bunch of cattle?”¹⁴⁶

Although the rituals surrounding Alexander’s death followed many of the same patterns that ones for Lincoln did, the rituals in 1894 did not ensure the success of the government or Alexander’s place in the collective memory of the nation as a beloved and effective leader. In retracting many of his father’s reforms in his efforts to shore up autocratic rule, Alexander III was remembered by some as a despotic reactionary who implemented police rule. His regime had, as Richard Robbins writes, “acquired a well deserved reputation for *proizvol*—the arbitrary abuse of authority.” His high taxes on rural areas indirectly worsened the great famines, only to be followed by the cholera epidemic. A satirical epitaph, published abroad, outside of governmental censorship in 1900, speaks to the growing dissatisfaction with the state in which he left the empire upon his death:

Epitaph for Aleksandr III*

For many years he ruled Rus
Without laws and without any principles
Just like Ivan the Terrible or Paul I;
Increased the debt by billions,
In Petersburg, he built the Cross,**
Forcing all of Rus to tremble
Rus has not forgotten
He glorified himself,

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 357.

¹⁴⁶ A.S. Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, (Moscow-Petrograd, 1923), 166. As quoted in Chernukha, “Emperor Alexander III,” 364.

In his defense of Europe,
And decapitated Russia,
This supposed leader.

* Written by hand and painstakingly distributed in Russia

** This new prison is called “The Cross” for its architectural shape ¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ *Boliezn' i smert' Aleksandra III: Pravdivyia zamietki* (London: Unknown, 1900), 1.

Mortal Leaders in Martyred Saints

Ironically, both Lincoln and Alexander III eschewed unnecessary pomp and circumstance during their lifetimes, yet their funerals became extravagant mourning pageants. The two governments portrayed the deaths as national and international tragedies, often employing imagery and symbolism typical for saints. The attention lavished upon the deceased leader's body served as a proxy for hundreds of thousands of deceased citizens. Furthermore, the people's outpouring of grief in response to the unexpected and sudden death of their leader illuminates the uncertainty they felt about their country's future. For America, Lincoln's assassination at the end of the Civil War left the country without a leader to navigate the complexities of reconstruction and reunification. Indeed, even Jefferson Davis, the Confederate president, expressed sorrow at the news of Lincoln's death, for he feared it would be "disastrous to our people," and that Lincoln, rather than his successor, President Andrew Johnson, would better handle the long and delicate process of reintegrating the seceded states.¹⁴⁸ For Russia, Alexander III's premature death occurred at the start of the *fin de siècle*. The people's rhetoric of malaise and fears of a modernity seemingly sliding into the abyss categorized this period. It entailed a rapid industrialization at an unnerving velocity alongside a religious revival and increased turn toward spirituality, accompanied by societal changes and growing discontent at Alexander's conservative reforms.¹⁴⁹ Alexander's death made his son, Nicholas II, the new tsar, a position no one, not even Nicholas himself, felt he was capable of adequately filling. Moreover, the governmental officials planning the funerals in both countries

¹⁴⁸ Swanson, *Bloody Crimes*, 196.

¹⁴⁹ For more, see: Mark Steinberg, *Petersburg Fin de Siècle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

were greatly invested in their attempts to successfully steer the country toward reconciliation and recovery through this grieving process. Ultimately, these rituals were inherently limited in their ability to achieve their intended aims: many perceived Alexander as an unsuccessful and reactionary autocrat who reversed many of his father's attempts to better the country whereas many Southerners believed Lincoln to be a despotic leader intent on ruining their society.

The direction in which each train traveled underscores differences in the systems of government and their respective traditions concerning deceased leaders. Lincoln's train carried his remains *away* from the seat of power whereas Alexander's brought his remains *toward* it. The end of a tsar's reign came with his death. The remains of preceding tsars all lay in St. Petersburg's Peter and Paul Cathedral, reaffirming the dynastic succession of the autocracy.¹⁵⁰ An American presidential term was limited in years, and so few died while in office. There is no custom dictating the burial place of presidents and only one, Woodrow Wilson, is buried in Washington, D.C. In a democracy in which conceivably any man could be elected president, the deceased presidents are most often interred near their homes. The authority of the presidency did not rest on the legitimizing factor of all of those who came before him. The strength of comparative history, as German historian Heinz-Gerhard Haupt writes, is that it "makes explicit what is mostly implicit," with these two cases separated by decades and continents.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ It cannot be known if the grandeur of Alexander III's obsequies would have created a new precedent, for he was the last tsar to receive an official state burial and funeral services in a church; Boris Yeltsin was the next leader to receive church funeral services after his death in 2007. Alexander's successor, Nicholas II, died at the hands of the Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution on July 17, 1918. Eighty years later, his remains, as well as the remains of his family and the servants who died with them, were reinterred in St. Peter and Paul Cathedral.

¹⁵¹ Haupt, "Comparative History—a Contested Method," 3.

Though perhaps equally magnificent in scale and splendor, the two funeral pageants differed vastly in their success. Lincoln's unequivocally elevated him for decades to come, whereas similar attempts to venerate Alexander ultimately failed to secure his position. The funeral for Lincoln helped begin the healing process for the nation whereas Alexander's marked the beginning of an ever increasing divide in Russian society, eventually culminating in the 1917 Revolution. Both funerals, however, illustrate the power and function of ritualized mourning organized by government officials. There were noteworthy funeral rituals after the assassinations of Presidents James Garfield and William McKinley in 1881 and 1901, respectively, but they did not match the grandeur of Lincoln's. After President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, the U.S. chief of protocol consulted Jacqueline Kennedy. Her only instructions for the funeral of her husband and president during the tumultuous Civil Rights era were, "Make it like Lincoln's."¹⁵²

¹⁵² Swanson, *Bloody Crimes*, 398.

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